

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1, 2, 8, 11-17, 23 and 26-30 stand rejected, with claims 3-7, 9, 10, 18-22, 24 and 25 objected to in the outstanding Official Action. Claims 3 and 18 have been cancelled without prejudice and claims 1, 4, 5, 9, 10, 16, 19, 20, 24 and 25 amended. Therefore, claims 1, 2, 4-17 and 19-30 are the only claims remaining in this application.

The Examiner's indication of acceptance of the originally filed formal drawings in this application is very much appreciated. Additionally, the Examiner's consideration of all prior art noted in Applicants' previously submitted Information Disclosure Statement is appreciated.

The Examiner's indication that claims 3-7, 9, 10, 18-22, 24 and 25 contain allowable subject matter (Official Action, page 5) is very much appreciated. The subject matter of claims 3 and 18 has been incorporated into independent claims 1 and 16 and therefore claims 1 and 16 and all claims dependent thereon (claims 2, 4, 8, 11-15, 17, 19, 23 and 26-30) are believed to be allowed. Additionally, Applicants have rewritten claim 5 in independent form (with claims 6 and 7 dependent thereon) and claim 20 in independent form (with claims 1 and 22 dependent thereon) rendering them in condition for allowance. Further, claims 9, 10, 24 and 25 have all been amended to read in independent form including the limitations of the claims from which they previously depended.

As a result of the above amendments, all remaining claims include the limitations noted as being allowable in the outstanding Official Action and any further objection thereto is respectfully traversed.

The Examiner rejects claims 1, 2, 8, 11-13, 16, 17, 23 and 26-28 under 35 USC §103 as unpatentable over Barrett (U.S. Patent 6,021,261) in view of Collins (U.S. Patent 6,031,847).

These claims have either been amended to include allowable subject matter as noted on page 5 of the Official Action or to depend from claims containing such allowable subject matter. As a result, any further rejection of claims 1, 2, 8, 11-13, 16, 17, 23 and 26-28 under 35 USC §103 is respectfully traversed.

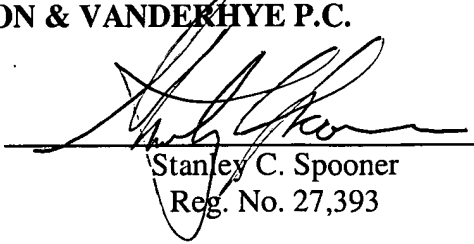
Claims 14, 15, 29 and 30 stand rejected under 35 USC §103 as unpatentable over the Barrett/Collins combination in further view of Iijima (U.S. Patent 6,687,860). Claims 14 and 15 depend from amended and now allowable claim 1 (because it incorporates the subject matter of cancelled claim 3) and claims 29 and 30 depend from claim 16 (now allowable as containing the limitations of former claim 18). Accordingly, the rejection under §103 has been obviated and these claims are believed in condition for allowance.

Having responded to all objections and rejections set forth in the outstanding Official Action, it is submitted that remaining claims 1, 2, 4-17 and 19-30 are in condition for allowance and notice to that effect is respectfully solicited. In the event the Examiner is of the opinion that a brief telephone or personal interview will facilitate allowance of one or more of the above claims, he is respectfully requested to contact Applicants' undersigned representative.

Respectfully submitted,

NIXON & VANDERHYTE P.C.

By: _____


Stanley C. Spooner
Reg. No. 27,393

SCS:kmm
901 North Glebe Road, 11th Floor
Arlington, VA 22203-1808
Telephone: (703) 816-4000
Facsimile: (703) 816-4100